



# *The Wonderful Boys*

A. H. Wratislaw

Russian

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*Intermediate*  
*5 min read*

A father had three daughters; they went to the river to wash the linen. The king's son rode up. One said: 'Well, if the king's son were to marry me, I would hem the whole palace round with a single needle.' The second said: 'If the king's son were to marry me, I would feed the whole palace with a single roll.' But the third said: 'If the king's son were to marry me, I would bring him two sons, each with a moon on his head and a star on the nape of his neck.' The king rode up to the one that said: 'I would bring him two sons;' they lived one year, two years, and she was expecting to become a mother. The king came and gave orders to her mother: 'Whatever God gives my wife, let it be reared.' He rode away twenty miles off, and God gave his wife children; she brought him two sons, each with a moon on his head and a star on the nape of his neck. His wife wrote a letter, that God had given them two sons, each with a moon on his head and a star on the nape of his neck. A servant carried the letter to him, and went in to stop the night at the house of the queen's sister, without knowing that it was her sister. He lay down to sleep; then she took and opened the letter, erased that which was written in it—'Each with a moon on his head and a star on the nape of his neck'—and wrote instead, that it was not a snake nor a lizard—it was nobody knew what, that she had become the mother of. The man went to the king and delivered the letter.

He read it through: 'What God has given her, let it not be destroyed without my orders.' He went back and again stopped at the same place to pass the night; she took the letter again, opened it, erased what the king had written, and wrote instead, that before he returned, she was to bury her sons. When he arrived, the king's wife

read it through, and began to weep; she was grieved to bury those beautiful sons. She dug two graves in the yard and buried them; out of them grew two maples, a golden stem and a silver one. The king came to the house and put her away because she had buried them without his orders.

He rode off and married his wife's second sister. They lived together, and after a time she said: 'My most illustrious husband! let us cut down those maples and make ourselves a bed.'—'Ah! my most illustrious husband! let us cut up that bed and burn it, and sprinkle the ashes on the road.' A shepherd was driving sheep that way; a ewe strayed and swallowed some of the ashes; she bore two he-lambs; on the head of each was a moon, on the back of the neck a star. Then she disliked those lambs, ordered them to be slaughtered, and the entrails to be thrown out into the street. The first wife came out, collected the entrails, cooked and ate them, and became the mother of two sons; each had a moon on his head and a star on the nape of his neck. The two sons grew and grew, and never took off their caps. Then the king had a desire that somebody should come to tell him stories. People said that there were two brothers there who could tell stories. They came to tell stories.

They began to tell a story. 'There was a king who had a queen; the queen became the mother of two sons; on the head of each was a moon, on the nape of the neck a star. Afterwards the king went hunting; the queen wrote a letter and sent it. The man went to her sister's for the night; she took the letter, opened it, and wrote that it was not a snake nor a lizard—it was nobody knew what, that the queen had been the mother of. The king read it through, and replied that it was to be reared, whether it were a snake or a lizard. The man went homewards, and again rested at the house where he had passed the night. She opened the letter, and wrote that she was to bury it *'by my arrival.'*

Then she dug two holes—graves—and buried them; and two maples grew out, a golden stem and a silver one. The new queen contrived that they should be cut down and a bed made of them, and began to sleep on it, and began to be uncomfortable: she ordered the bed to be cut up and burnt, and the ashes to be thrown out into the yard. A shepherd was driving sheep; a ewe swallowed some of the ashes and bore two he-lambs; each had a moon on the head and a star on the back of the neck. The queen ordered the lambs to be slaughtered, and their entrails to be thrown out into the street. Her divorced sister went out into the street, collected the entrails, took them to her house, cooked and ate them, and became the mother of two sons; each had a moon on his head and a star on the nape of his neck.' The boys bowed and took off their caps, thus illuminating the whole room. The second wife was placed on an iron harrow, and torn to pieces, but the king took his first wife, and they began to live happily.

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